

Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*: a bibliography and summary of specimens

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Le Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai*: bibliographie et catalogue des spécimens. Le Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai*, endémique aux montagnes de l'Angola occidentale, est considérée comme une espèce menacée (avec le statut de 'Vulnérable'). En l'absence d'observations entre 1971 et 2005, nous connaissons très peu de choses sur cette espèce. Cette note résume l'information disponible, basée sur 19 spécimens récoltés de 1907 à 1971, et présente une bibliographie complète, dans l'espoir d'encourager plus de recherches sur l'espèce.

Summary. Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* is the only threatened bird endemic to the montane region of Western Angola. With no sightings between 1971 and August 2005, knowledge of this species is very poor. This note presents a summary of available information, based on 19 specimens collected between 1907 and 1971, and provides a complete bibliography, in order to encourage further work on this high-priority species.

Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* (or Swierstra's Spurfowl *Pternistis swierstrai*) was last recorded in February 1971 (Pinto 1983), until its rediscovery at Mt Moco in August 2005 (Mills & Dean in prep.). This Vulnerable species (BirdLife International 2000, 2004) is the only threatened bird endemic to montane western Angola, an area of critical importance for biodiversity conservation (Bibby *et al.* 1992, Stattersfield *et al.* 1998).

Swierstra's Francolin has a highly fragmented range of c.18,500 km² and is suspected, despite the complete lack of sightings for more than 30 years, to have a declining population estimated at 2,500–9,999. It does not occur in any protected area. The main threat it faces is loss of its restricted habitat. At Mt Moco, thought to be the most important site for its conservation, clearing and burning of forest and other suitable habitat has been reported since the 1970s (Huntley 1974) and continues to this day (Mills & Dean in prep.). Hunting also is suspected to be a threat (BirdLife International 2005).

Most available information on the species has been summarised elsewhere (Pinto 1983, Collar & Stuart 1985, Urban *et al.* 1986, Johnsgard 1988, McGowan 1994, BirdLife International 2000, Dean 2000, Madge & McGowan 2002). However, given how little is known about Swierstra's Francolin, its high conservation importance and recent changes in the political situation in Angola, I hope that a complete summary of

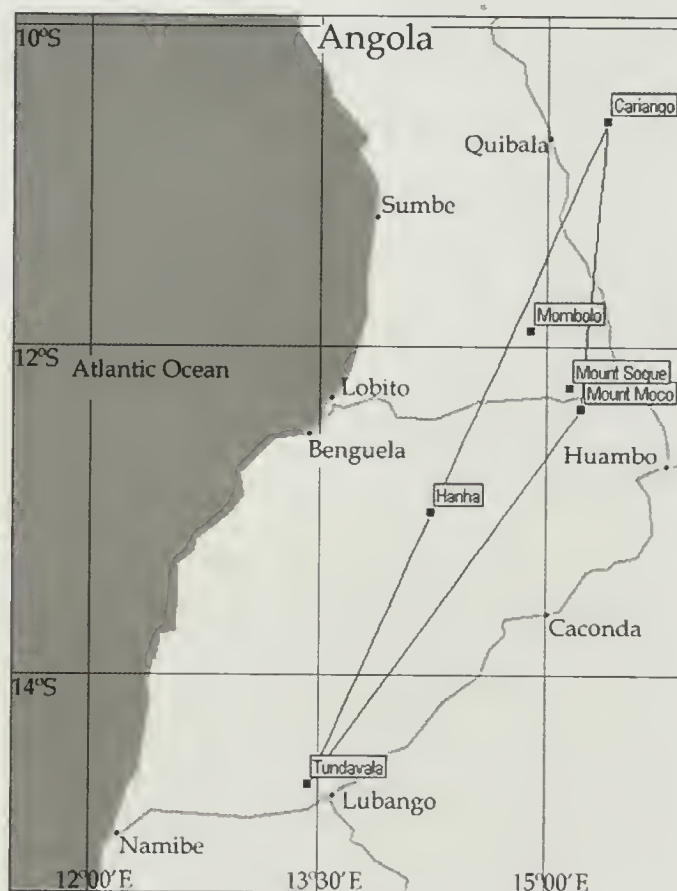


Figure 1. Distribution map of Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*, with collection localities boxed and joined to show Extent Of Occurrence as defined by BirdLife International (2000), and used to calculate estimated range of 18,500 km².

Carte de distribution du Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai*, avec le nom des localités d'où proviennent les spécimens encadrées et reliées entre elles pour montrer 'l'étendue de la répartition' comme définie par BirdLife International (2000) et utilisée pour calculer la répartition estimée à 18,500 km².

Table 1. Chronological list of the 19 known specimens of Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai*; the accuracy of the 20th entry is unknown and is a presumed duplication of one of the previous two entries.

Tableau 1. Liste chronologique des 19 spécimens connus du Francolin de Swierstra's *Francolinus swierstrai*; l'exactitude de la 20ème donnée est inconnue – elle est présumée être une duplication d'une des deux précédentes.

Museum abbreviations / Abréviations des musées: MNUC = Museu de História Natural—Museu de Zoologia, du Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal; TV = Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, South Africa; CMNH = Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh; FMNH = Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York; BMNH = Natural History Museum, Tring; IICA = Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola, Lubango, Angola.

sDate	Collector	Locality	Sex/Age	Collection	Specimen #	Source
1907	T. Cruz	Hanha	M	MNUC		Carreira 1990
7 Jun 1927	C. P. Chapman	Mombolo	M/Subad	TV	14713	Roberts 1929; T. Cassidy <i>in litt.</i> 2006.
20 Feb 1931	W. R. & L. Boulton	Mt Moco	M	CMNH	109388	S. Rogers <i>in litt.</i> 2006
1 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	F/Ad	FMNH	419128	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
1 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	F/Juv	FMNH	419130	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
3 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	M/Ad	FMNH	419126	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
6 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Soque	M/Ad	FMNH	419124	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
8 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	F/Juv	FMNH	419129	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
24 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	M/Ad	FMNH	419127	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
24 Sep 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	M	AMNH	800681	T. Trombone <i>in litt.</i> 2006
5 Oct 1954	G. Heinrich	Mt Moco	M/Ad	FMNH	419125	Traylor 1960; M. Hennen <i>in litt.</i> 2006
17 Aug 1957	G. Lathbury	Mt Moco	M/Ad	BMNH	1957.35.6	Hall (1960); M. Adams <i>in litt.</i> 2006
22 Aug 1957	T. Archer	Mt Moco	M (Imm)	**AMNH	707874	T. Trombone <i>in litt.</i> 2006
1962		Tundavala	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
11 Feb 1965	*F. Nobsegu	Tundavala	M/Ad	IICA	10530	pers. obs.
Not known		Tundavala	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
25 Mar 1968		Tundavala	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
Feb 1971		Cariango	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
Feb 1971		Cariango	F	IICA		Pinto (1983); pers. obs.
*31 Aug 1979	*J. Callos	Cariango	F/Ad	IICA	35123	pers. obs.

*transcription may be incorrect

**initially held in the BMNH

specimens collected (Table 1) and an annotated bibliography will stimulate further interest in this little-known species. BirdLife International (2005) should be consulted for research priorities. One such is to conduct species surveys, for which knowledge of calls will aid identification and recordings for call-up enhance ability to detect birds. Descriptions of its vocalisations (Mills in prep.) and some information on its current status at the Mt Moco Important Bird Area will be published elsewhere (Mills & Dean in prep.).

A history of collecting

Swierstra's Francolin was first collected at Hanha in Benguela province (13°18'S 14°12'E; see Fig. 1) in 1907 (erroneously dated 1935 by Collar & Stuart 1985), by Teodoro Cruz (Themido 1936, 1938a), but was not recognised at the time as an undescribed species. Twenty years later, in June

1927, the second specimen was collected at Mombola (=Mombolo; 11°55'S 14°51'E) in south-west Cuanza Sul province by C. P. Chapman. This specimen, a subadult male, was described by Roberts (1929) as a new species, *Chaetopus swierstrai*, and named after Mr C. J. Swierstra, then Director of the Transvaal Museum. Seven years later, Themido (1936) described as a new species *Francolinus cruzi*, using the male collected in 1907 as the type-specimen, which was subsequently recognised as being identical to *swierstrai*, thus *cruzi* is a synonym (White 1945).

The third specimen, another male, was collected at Mt Moco, Huambo province (12°25'S 15°11'E), in 1931 by Wolfrid Rudyerd Boulton Jr. and Laura Boulton and is held in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh. The first female was finally collected in 1954 by Gerd Heinrich (1958). He obtained a series of eight

birds from Mt Moco and nearby Mt Soque (12°17'S 15°07'E). Seven of these are in the Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH), and were examined and reported on by Traylor (1960). Traylor (1963) mentions that an adult male in breeding condition was collected on Mt Moco on 5 August; this is presumably an error, as Heinrich visited Mt Moco from 18 September to 5 October and Traylor cites no other source for his information other than Heinrich's seven specimens in the FMNH. Peters (1934) mentions that the FMNH possesses one or more specimens from Chitau, but this is almost certainly an error; FMNH does not currently hold specimens from anywhere other than Mt Moco and Mt Soque (M. Hennen *in litt.* 2006; The Field Museum 2006). The remaining specimen collected by Heinrich is housed in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, which also has one of two specimens, both males, collected at Mt Moco by the British Museum of Natural History expedition to Angola in 1957. The other specimen is held at The Natural History Museum, Tring, UK.

Pinto (1983) reported on the six specimens in the Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola (IICA) collection held in Lubango, Angola, four from Tundavala in Huíla province, the first of which was collected in 1962, and two from Cariango, Cuanza Sul province. Five of the six are females (skins and labels examined; pers. obs.). Pinto (1983) wrote that the last-known record of the species was of two specimens collected in February 1971 at Cariango, Cuanza Sul, 200 km north of Mombolo. However, one of these, in the collection of the IICA, appears to be labelled as having been collected at Cariango on 31 August 1979 (see Fig. 2). Either the label correctly reads 31 August 1971 or has been incorrectly relabelled since Pinto (1983). It is unlikely to be an additional specimen, because Pinto (1983) reports that there are six specimens in the collection, which there still are, and if it was collected in 1979 Pinto would not have seen it.

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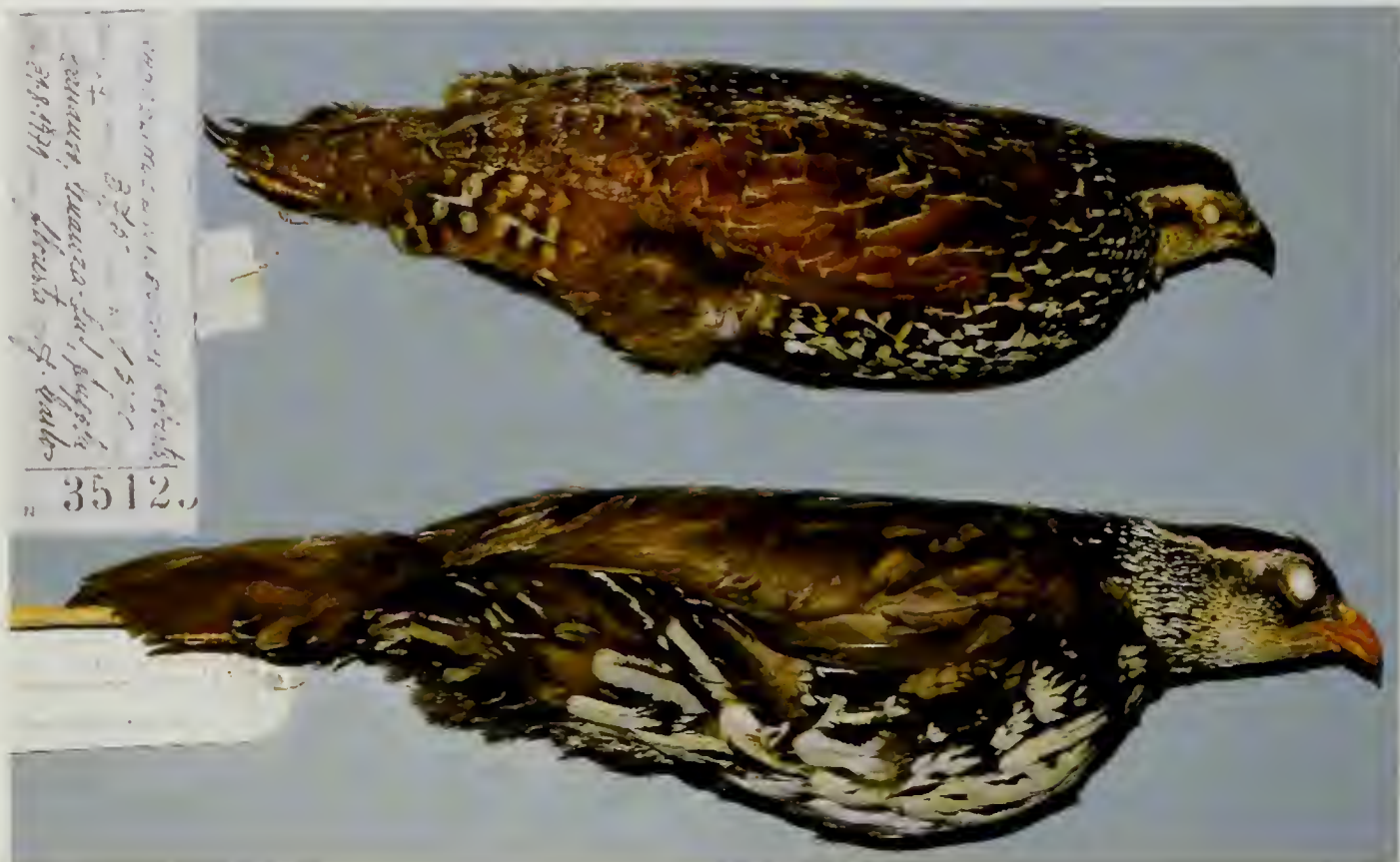


Figure 2. A female (top) and male (bottom) specimen of Swierstra's Francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* from the collection of the Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola in Lubango (city), Angola, with the label of the female enlarged (top left) to show a date of what appears to read '31-8-1979' (Michael S. L. Mills)

Spécimens femelle (en haut) et mâle (en bas) du Francolin de Swierstra *Francolinus swierstrai* de la collection du Instituto de Investigação Científica do Angola à Lubango, Angola, avec l'étiquette de la femelle élargie (en haut à gauche) pour montrer la date qui semble être '31-8-1979' (Michael S. L. Mills)

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